

2. Matters related to the mandate of the Committee on Victim Assistance

Dear Colleagues, it is a pleasure to see you all here in Geneva and it is an honour to introduce the observations of the Committee on Victim Assistance. Particularly during this important year for the Convention.

Algeria has the pleasure of Chairing the Committee on Victim Assistance and work together with my colleagues from Ecuador, Italy, and Uganda.

Allow me to thank the ICBL and ICRC who are observers on the Committee. We value very much their input into the committee's work. We also thank the ISU for the important support it provides to the Committee and to the States Parties.

Thanks to all those States Parties that have submitted updated information on their progress and challenges in implementing victim assistance commitments and to those States that provide assistance for the implementation of victim assistance.

Unfortunately, 10 States Parties with Victim Assistance responsibilities have not submitted an Article 7 Report in 2022 or did not include information on victim assistance in their reports. We look forward to hearing from you today. Updated information may complement our observations.

While we are pleased to have observed 9 States Parties reporting no new casualties this year, unfortunately 12 States Parties reported a total of over 900 mine casualties. This sad reality continues to remind us all of the urgency and the importance of our work to bring the new casualties to zero.

Dear Colleagues, I will not go through the entire observations as these are available on the Convention's website, and we look forward to receiving your feedback. I will simply highlight some main points from our general observations:

- Firstly, we welcome the information provided by States Parties on their efforts to maintain and strengthen national support mechanisms, including by designating national entity to coordinate victim assistance and ensure its integration into broader national frameworks. We note that in some cases the roles and responsibilities of coordinating entities could be clarified. We recognize the importance of, where national mine action centres (NMAC) exist, and underline their role in remaining actively involved to advocate for full integration of Victim Assistance into national health, social affairs and disability rights domains.

- Secondly, we welcome information provided by the States Parties on their efforts to ensure rehabilitation and other services to meet the physical and psychological needs of mine survivors. We note that in many cases services in this regard are insufficient. To assist you in meeting this challenge, the Committee focuses its efforts on rehabilitation this year.
- Thirdly, we would welcome additional information on efforts to ensure the socio-economic inclusion of mine survivors including information on lifting barriers and other measures to ensure the full inclusion and participation of mine survivors and their representative organisations. Allow me here to warmly welcome and thank all mine survivors and their representative organizations attending the meeting this week.

We welcome information provided on gender and diversity matters, nonetheless the information provided typically focuses on disaggregation of data. We would welcome information on gender and diversity across all relevant policies and programmes.

We appreciate the States Parties reporting on challenges they encounter in assisting mine victims. One of the common challenges reported by several States is not being in a position to conduct national survey to identify mine victims and understand their needs and challenges, which unfortunately affect the whole cycle of Victim Assistance. More insights on reported challenges are included in Committee's observations.

Lastly, we welcome increased information on the allocation of national funding for implementation and efforts to mobilize further financial and technical support to achieve the objectives of the OAP on Victim Assistance. We encourage the States Parties with Victim Assistance responsibilities, and the States Parties, in a position to support, to scale up efforts for Victim Assistance.

Dear colleagues, to conclude, the challenges can be addressed through an integrated approach and with increased efforts and partnerships, including for example, by taking advantage of the assistance and guidance provided by the WHO upon request by its Member States, and assistance available through other international organisations active in human rights, humanitarian response, social and economic development.

Thank you very much Mr. President and thank you once again to Committee Members.